

(Waco, Texas) – **U.S. Representative Chet Edwards** today delivered an address at a public re-activation ceremony for the Texas National Guard's 1<sup>st</sup>

Battalion, 143<sup>rd</sup>

Infantry Airborne Regiment at the Texas State Technical College Airfield. The 1<sup>st</sup>

Battalion is the only Airborne Infantry Battalion in the entire Army National Guard. The event was kicked-off with over 100 paratroopers falling from the sky in a parachute drop.

The Texas Army National Guard is currently considering locations in McLennan County for a new facility for the 143<sup>rd</sup>, and Congressman Edwards has secured funding in the House-passed 2011 Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations bill that will go toward the planning and design of the new facility.

**The following are Edwards' remarks as prepared for delivery:**

General Mayorga:

Thank you for your kind remarks and for your leadership in behalf of our state and nation. It is a privilege to be with you today and with the Members, Families and Friends of the Texas National Guard.

As a Wacoan, I want to say, "Welcome back" to the members of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 143<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Airborne Regiment who are here today at their historic home in McLennan County. As a Congressman, I want to thank you for your service to country. As a father, I want to thank you for making the world a safer, better place for my two young sons.

Today, all across our country, people are gathering with family, friends, and fellow Americans to reflect on a tragic day nine years ago, a day that is seared into the soul of this nation.

We will never forget the innocent people who lost their lives to a murderous act of terrorism on September 11<sup>th</sup>. Today, we stand united as Americans and honor their memory through our love of country, and commitment to democracy and community. Those who sought to divide us failed. They united us. Those who sought to weaken us failed. They only strengthened us and our resolve to defeat them.

And we will.

In the wake of September 11<sup>th</sup>, the U.S. National Guard reminded us all of the important role the citizen soldier plays every day in defending our homeland and Members of the Guard and their families continue to sacrifice on behalf of the American family in Afghanistan, Iraq and throughout the world today.

Today, we also gather to reactivate the Texas Army National Guard's 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 143<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Airborne Regiment—the only airborne infantry Guard battalion in the nation.

When the National Guard approached me about re-locating the 143<sup>rd</sup> in McLennan County, I was honored to work with them and McLennan County leaders to help make that a possibility. I

hope it will become a formal reality in the near future. If hundreds of troops come to McLennan County to train here, a new National Guard headquarters will create jobs and boost economic development in Central Texas. Most importantly, a new National Guard headquarters in McLennan County would play a vital role in defending our nation against those who would threaten or attack us.

America could not accomplish our military missions without the dedicated service and sacrifice of the National Guard.

The 143<sup>rd</sup> Regiment's history in our great state and nation spans almost two centuries.

In December 1836, the Republic of Texas raised a Battalion of mounted troops to protect the frontier. By the Civil War, the Texas Militia companies became conventional Infantry and Cavalry Troops. Many of the 143<sup>rd</sup>'s companies were called into service during the Civil War where they were known for their fierce bravery in battle.

They fought Santa Anna for Texas independence, and their place in military history encompasses almost every War waged by the United States.

The 143<sup>rd</sup> Regiment officially formed in 1873 in Waco.

The modern 143<sup>rd</sup> Infantry was born on October 15<sup>th</sup>, 1917 following its consolidation with the 5<sup>th</sup>

Texas Infantry Regiment. The combined unit was re-designated as the 143<sup>rd</sup>

Infantry of the 36<sup>th</sup>

Infantry Division.

During World War II the 143<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Regiment helped defeat the Germans and by the end of World War II, the 143<sup>rd</sup> had five men who were awarded the Medal of Honor, and the Regiment received five Presidential Unit Citations for their actions.

In 1968, the history of 143<sup>rd</sup> as an Airborne Infantry Unit began. By September 2009, the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion (Airborne), 143

<sup>rd</sup>  
Infantry Regiment was officially formed. Once again, the Members of the 143<sup>rd</sup>  
Infantry are on their way to making history by returning to their historic home here in Waco.

The National Guard truly is the keeper of the torch of liberty. For everything dear to us as Americans: our freedoms, our security from threats abroad; the protection of our borders and our safety in times of natural disasters -- the Guard is always there. Now, we must see that our nation has your back, both in words and deeds.

For the past 3 and half years, it's been a privilege for me to chair the House Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Subcommittee.

On the military construction side of my Subcommittee's work, I want to thank you. With your support, my Subcommittee added a new Guard and Reserve initiative that provided \$60 million in funding for construction initiatives of the Guard for Fiscal year 2010.

The even better news is that, with this congressional initiative, combined with congressionally-directed appropriations, our 2011 Guard and Reserve military construction appropriation is \$1.8 billion, which is the largest single investment in Guard and Reserve facilities since at least 1964. Let me be clear: we could not have accomplished that step forward without the strong support and leadership of the Texas National Guard.

We are going to face difficult budget times ahead, given our huge national deficits. Yet, with the completion of the 2005 Base Realignment and Closing projects next year, and with the reduction of our forces in Iraq, I believe now is the time for Congress and the Administration to make a major commitment to modernizing our Guard facilities.

The bottom line to me is this: we cannot expect the National Guard to face 21<sup>st</sup> century threats and challenges while training in World War II era facilities that are outdated, undersized and

under protected.

Whether it was the service of our active duty soldiers or Members of the Guard serving our states, I have seen up close the sacrifices you are making for our states and our country, and I will never forget it.

As someone who represented Ft. Hood through three combat deployments and visited the Texas National Guard in Bosnia, I learned that for you who have answered our nation's call to duty, there are no makeup days for the missed births of your children, and no makeup days for missed birthdays, anniversaries, school plays and sporting events. That's one reason I believe the unsung heroes in our nation's defense are the spouses and children of our servicemen and women. For the Guard families here, I say you may not have worn our nation's uniform, but you have truly served through your daily sacrifices. For that, we salute you.

Whatever we have tried to do for those of you who have served, in my book, it is never enough. Nevertheless, I believe our nation has a moral obligation to honor our servicemen and women and our veterans with our words and our deeds.

Thank you to the Members of the National Guard, past and present, to the 143<sup>rd</sup> and your families, who have given so much to the American family. God bless you and your families, and may God bless Texas and our great nation.

*Edwards co chairs the House Army Caucus and serves as chairman of the House Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Subcommittee.*

